

Lesson Unit 7: Dependent Co-Arising

Learning Outcomes:

At the completion of the lesson, students will be able to

- Explain that Dependent co-Arising is the philosophical middle doctrine of Theravāda Buddhism
- Explain the interconnected and interdependent nature of all of the existence
- Apply Dependent co-Arising for analyzing problems and issues in today's society

Student Activities:

- Read each of the Readings carefully and underline/ highlight the key words and concepts in each reading.
- Also go through the slides of the PowerPoint presentation.
- Draw a mind-map around the main topic linking the key words and concepts that you underlined or highlighted in the readings showing their relationship to the main topic and also to each other
- Read the given original sources to be familiar with the texts
- Prepare a chart showing an incident/ event/ situation and its possible causes as well as the causes of those causes

For your journal entries, write detailed accounts on the following: *Paṭiccasamuppāda*, Middle doctrine, Eternalism, Annihilationism

Notes

Dependent Co-Arising and "This I"

- ***Paṭicca-samuppāda*** = Dependent co-arising or "this arises together depending on that"

= It tells the "uniformity" of the causal relations

- ***Paṭicca*** = having moved toward or having gone forward; depending upon or dependently

Samuppāda = co-arising or coming into existence together.

Obvious effect (*samuppāda*) is connected with its possible causes.

Paṭicca-samuppāda = refers to an event or phenomenon that has arisen depending upon conditions (*paccaya*). It is a description of an effect, not a cause; this effect is then traced back to its conditions

Characteristics of the *paṭicca-samuppāda*

- ❖ objectivity (*tathatā*) – corresponds to reality and the "those conditions alone, neither more nor less, bring about this or that event."
 - ❖ necessity (*avithatā*) – when the conditions come together, events and things are produced: "there is no failure even for a moment to produce the events which arise when the conditions come together."
 - ❖ invariability (*anāññatā*) – lack of exception or existence of regularity – a certain set of conditions gives rise to a certain effect, not to something completely different
- conditionality (*idappaccayatā*) - "relatedness of this" or "this-condition-ness": a thing comes into existence only if the necessary conditions are available

More characteristics

- ❖ Nothing arises/ occurs/ is produced accidentally
- ❖ Nothing is produced from a single cause
- ❖ A result/ effect is always a plurality
- ❖ From many causes many results are produced
- ❖ There is no independent status to anything, everything is interdependent
- ❖ Nothing is permanent; that which arises must necessarily be subject to death and destruction.

Oil-lamp remains burning depending on the wick, oil, container, oxygen, temperature and so forth. All these factors are essential for the oil lamp to remain in burning.

Basic formula:

When that (A) is, this (B) is (*imasmim sati idaṃ hoti*);

With the arising of that (A), this (B) arises (*imassa uppādā idaṃ uppajjati*).

When that (A) is not, this (B) is not (*imasmim asati idaṃ na hoti*);

With the ceasing of that (A), this (B) ceases (*imassa nirodhā idaṃ nirujjhati*).

Causes = conditions

- Buddhist theory of causation explains the reality of "This I" and all forms of human experience. It explains **paṭicca-samuppannā-dhammā** = causally conditioned phenomena or things everything (*sabba*), every individual things, in the universe and relations among them;
 - the causal pattern in the physical phenomena both organic (seed) and inorganic (season); natural occurrences like drought, earthquakes, plant life
 - reality of life (suffering and cessation); life now
 - psychological processes; process and the content of thinking (conceptions/ theories)
 - human behavior (social/ political)
 - means and goals of moral behavior; attainment of freedom
 - events
 - present time with the world **paccuppanna** "arisen with a background"
 - the evolution and dissolution of the world process

The theory of dependent co-arising explains the existence of universal harmonious pattern, a causal cosmic order (*dhmma-dhātu*).

It explains the uniformity of the causal relations, the interconnection and interdependence of all things and life on earth and in the outer world.

It explains that this world and everything belonging to it have a structure, a method of functioning, and that our planet earth is a delicately balanced system of interdependent parts, an eco-system (*dhmmatā esā*).

The conditional structure of our situation now:

- Why do we suffer misery and pain; old age and death (*soka-parideva-dukkha-domanass-upāyāsa; jarā-maraṇa*)? Because we are born and are subject to be born (*jāti*).
- Why are we born? Because we are in a process of becoming (*bhava*).
- Why are we in becoming? Because of clinging or attachment (*upādāna*).
- Why do we cling to the objects of this world? Because of our craving, the thirst for enjoyment (*taṇhā*).

- Why do we have this craving? Because of feeling (*vedanā*)
- Why do we have this feeling? Because of contact (*phassa*)
- Why do we have this contact? Because of the six sense faculties (*salāyatana*)
- Why do we have the six sense-spheres? Because of the psycho-physical organism (*nāma-rūpa*)
- Why do we have this psycho-physical organism? Because of consciousness (*viññāṇa*)
- Why do we have consciousness? Because of mental formations (*saṅkhāra*)
- Why do we have mental formations? Because of ignorance (*avijjā*).

"One who sees the dependent arising sees the Buddha's teaching, and he who sees the Buddha's teaching sees the dependent arising."

"When phenomena appear to an ardent and contemplating person, then all his doubts go away when he knows a phenomenon together with its causes (*sa-hetu-dhamma*); when he knows the ceasing of the conditions (*paccayānaṃ khayama*)" (Vin I 2)

"These human beings are delighting in attachment, delighted by attachment and excited by attachment. By these beings who are delighting in attachment ... this position, namely, conditionality, dependent arising is not easily perceived." (M I 167)

Buddhist theory of causation = the middle doctrine; avoids all extremes – eternalism and annihilationism

Rejects the following causal theories:

Self-causation (*sayam-kataṃ sukha-dukkhaṃ*) sees an identity between the cause and effect. S/he does s/he experiences. It is connected with *Sassatavāda* or eternalism. Sees a self/soul in everything.

External-causation (*param-kataṃ sukha-dukkhaṃ*) recognizes a difference between cause and effect. One does another experiences. Time, God, karma (action), or fate caused it. Determinism (*niyati-vāda*). It is connected with *Ucchedavāda* or annihilationism.

A combination of self and external causation (*sayamkataṃ ca paramkataṃ ca sukha-dukkhaṃ*). Half by oneself, and half by another.

Neither caused by oneself nor caused by another (*asayamkāraṃ aparamkāraṃ*). Accidentalism – "accident" (*ahetu-appaccaya-vāda*) where life is regarded as a product of the blind play of mechanical nature. This is also called *addhicca-samuppanna-vāda* which denies any form of causation.

Everything exists - existence

Everything does not exist – non-existence

Everything is one

Everything is many

Soul and body are one (annihilationism)

Soul and body are two different things (eternalism)

The cause evolves into a fruit (tree is in the seed)

The cause is seen as the fruit = fruit is an illusion. (tree is seen as a ghost at night)

"To him who perceives through proper insight the arising of the things of the world, the belief in non-existence (annihilationism) does not occur; To him who perceives through proper insight the ceasing of the things of the world, the belief in existence (eternalism/ immutability) does not arise."

❖ In the Commentaries: dependent co-arising is described under five functional laws

- I. Season law (*utu-niyāma*) – physical laws
- II. Seed law (*bīja-niyāma*) – biological laws
- III. Mind law (*citta-niyāma*) – psychological laws
- IV. Action law (*kamma-niyāma*) – moral laws
- V. Phenomenal law (*dhamma-niyāma*) – phenomenal laws

Reading 1: Dependent Co-Arising and “This I”

Paṭicca-samuppāda means dependent co-arising or Dependent co-Arising, more literally, “this arises together depending on that”. It tells the “uniformity” of the causal relations. The word *paṭicca* means “having moved toward” or “having gone forward”; “depending upon” or “dependently” and the word *samuppāda* means “co-arising” or “coming into existence together”. The past participle form of *paṭicca-samuppāda* is *paṭicca-samuppanna* which refers to an event or phenomenon that has arisen depending upon conditions (*paccaya*); hence the phrase *paṭicca-samuppannā dhammā*, the dependently arisen things. The word *paṭiccasamuppanna* describes an effect, not a cause; this effect is then traced back to its conditions. In other words, the obvious effect (*samuppāda*) is connected with its possible causes.

Some characteristics of the *paṭicca-samuppāda* are given in the discourses. The word *tathatā* means objectivity for this theory corresponds to reality: “those conditions alone, neither more nor less, bring about this or that event.” The word *avitathatā* means necessity: “when the conditions come together, events and things are produced”; “there is no failure even for a moment to produce the events which arise when the conditions come together.” The word *anaññatā* means invariability and it confirms the lack of exception, the existence of regularity: “a certain set of conditions gives rise to a certain effect, not to something completely different.” The word *idappaccayatā* means conditionality, literally, “relatedness of this” or “this-condition-ness”: “a thing comes into existence only if the necessary conditions are available.”

More characteristics are given in the *Visuddhimagga*. Buddhist causation theory confirms that nothing arises, occurs, or is produced accidentally; nothing is produced from a single cause; a result or effect is always a plurality; from many causes many results are produced; there is no independent status to anything; everything is interdependent; nothing is permanent; that which arises must necessarily be subject to death and destruction.

The theory is presented in the texts with the following basic formula:

When that (A) is, this (B) is (*imasmim sati idaṃ hoti*); with the arising of that (A), this (B) arises (*imassa uppādā idaṃ uppajjati*).

When that (A) is not, this (B) is not (*imasmim asati idaṃ na hoti*); with the ceasing of that (A), this (B) ceases (*imassa nirodhā idaṃ nirujjhati*).

In the early discourses, causes (*hetu*) and conditions (*paccaya*) are taken together. Oil-lamp remains burning depending on the wick, oil, container, oxygen, temperature and so forth. All these factors are essential for the oil lamp to remain in burning. They could be causes or conditions.

Buddhist theory of causation explains the reality of “This I” and all forms of human experience. It explains *paṭicca-samuppannā-dhammā*, causally conditioned phenomena or things; everything (*sabba*) and every individual thing in the universe and relations among them. It explains the causal pattern in the physical phenomena both organic (seed) and inorganic (season); natural occurrences like drought, earthquakes, plant life; reality of life (suffering and cessation); life now; psychological processes; process and the content of thinking (conceptions/ theories);

human behavior (social/ political); means and goals of moral behavior; attainment of freedom; events; the evolution and dissolution of the world processes. It explains the present time which is presented with the word *paccuppanna* "arisen with a background".

The theory of dependent co-arising explains the existence of universal harmonious pattern, a causal cosmic order (*dhamma-dhātu*). It explains the uniformity of the causal relations, the interconnection and interdependence of all things and life on earth and in the outer world. It explains that this world and everything belonging to it have a structure, a method of functioning, and that our planet earth is a delicately balanced system of interdependent parts, an eco-system (*dhammatā esā*).

It explains the conditional structure of our situation now: Why do we suffer misery and pain; old age and death (*soka-parideva-dukkha-domanass-upāyāsa; jarā-maraṇa*)? Because we are born and are subject to be born (*jāti*). Why are we born? Because we are in a process of becoming (*bhava*). Why are we in becoming? Because of clinging or attachment (*upādāna*). Why do we cling to the objects of this world? Because of our craving, the thirst for enjoyment (*taṇhā*). Why do we have this craving? Because of feeling (*vedanā*). Why do we have this feeling? Because of contact (*phassa*). Why do we have this contact? Because of the six sense faculties (*salāyatana*). Why do we have the six sense-spheres? Because of the psycho-physical organism (*nāma-rūpa*). Why do we have this psycho-physical organism? Because of consciousness (*viññāṇa*). Why do we have consciousness? Because of mental formations (*saṅkhāra*). Why do we have mental formations? Because of ignorance (*avijjā*).

The scriptures say that "one who sees the dependent arising sees the Buddha's teaching; one who sees the Buddha's teaching sees the dependent arising." However, "these human beings are delighting in attachment, delighted by attachment and excited by attachment. By these beings who are delighting in attachment ... this position, namely, conditionality, dependent arising is not easily perceived" (M I 167).

"When phenomena appear to an ardent and contemplating person, then all his doubts go away when he knows a phenomenon together with its causes (*sa-hetu-dhammam*); when he knows the ceasing of the conditions (*paccayānaṃ khayam*)" (Vin I 2).

Buddhist theory of causation is the middle doctrine; it avoids all both extremes: eternalism and annihilationism. It rejects the self-causation (*sayam-kataṃ sukha-dukkham*) which sees the identity between the cause and effect for it professes that one who does actions experiences their results. The self-causation theory is connected with *sassatavāda* or eternalism for it sees a self/soul in everything.

Buddhist theory of causation rejects external-causation (*param-kataṃ sukha-dukkham*) which recognizes a difference between cause and effect. One does actions another experiences their results. Time, God, karma (action), or fate causes it. Such belief is a form of determinism (*niyati-vāda*). It is connected with *ucchedavāda* or annihilationism.

Buddhist causation theory also rejects theory that combines both the self and the external causations (*sayamkataṃ ca paramkataṃ ca sukha-dukkham*) and understands that half caused by oneself, and the other half by another.

Buddhist theory also negates the theory that states, neither caused by oneself nor caused by another (*asayamkāram aparamkāram*), which is a form of accidentalism – "accident" (*ahetu-appaccaya-vāda*) where life is regarded as a product of the blind play of mechanical nature. This is also called *addhicca-samuppanna-vāda* which denies any form of causation.

Buddhist causation theory denies the theories of everything exists – existence; everything does not exist – non-existence; everything is one; everything is many; soul and body are one (annihilationism); soul and body are two different things (eternalism); the cause evolves into a fruit (tree is in the seed); the cause is seen as the fruit or fruit is an illusion as in the case of tree is seen as a ghost at night.

“To him who perceives through proper insight the arising of the things of the world, the belief in non-existence (annihilationism) does not occur; To him who perceives through proper insight the ceasing of the things of the world, the belief in existence (eternalism/ immutability) does not arise.”

In the Commentaries: dependent co-arising is also described under five functional laws: season law (*utu-niyāma*) – physical laws; seed law (*bīja-niyāma*) – biological laws; mind law (*citta-niyāma*) – psychological laws; action law (*kamma-niyāma*) – moral laws; phenomenal law (*dhamma-niyāma*) – phenomenal laws.

Reading 2: Classification of Dhammā

In the terms of the first truth, all formations (*saṅkhāra*) are transitory, painful and devoid of personality. The rule applies to all phenomena connected with the life and liberation of a person: the 5 aggregates (*khandha*), 12 bases of consciousness (*āyatana*) and 18 elements (*dhātu*).

However, to these ancient classification proposed in the canonical writings, the schools added a new one embracing all the elements of existence (*dhammā/dharmas*) distributed into two groups:

- Conditioned *dhammā*, i.e. those arising from causes and subject to becoming
- Unconditioned (*asaṅkhata*) *dhammā* unaffected by the process of causality.

The Theravādins drew up a list of 82 dhammā:

- 81 *saṅkhata*, conditioned
- 1 *asaṅkhata*, unconditioned.

The *saṅkhata dhammā* are classed in three categories:

- *rūpa*, corporeality
- *cetasika*, mental factors
- *citta*, thought.

(1) *Rūpa*

Rūpa includes everything material in the universe, in all 28 *dhammā*:

- The 4 *dhātu*, primary elements: earth (*paṭhavi*), water (*āpo*), fire (*tejo*), and wind (*vāyo*), whose characteristics are respectively solidity, liquidity, heat and movement.
- 24 derived phenomena, distributed in the following way:

(1-5) Five physical sense organs (*indriya*) constituting the internal bases (*ajjhāttika āyatana*) of consciousness: organs of the eye, ear, nose, tongue and body.

(6-10) Five material sense objects (*visaya*) constituting the external bases of consciousness (*bāhira āyatana*): form or appearance, sound, odour, taste and the tangible.

(11-12) Sexual characteristics: femininity (*itthi-indriya*) and masculinity (*purisa-indriya*).

(13) *Hadayaavatthu*, the heart, as the physical foundation of mental processes.

- (14-15) Corporal and vocal intimations (*viññatti*), in other words, gestures and words which manifest externally and materially the reasoned and voluntary actions from which they derive and with which they are associated.
- (16) Physical vitality (*rūpajīvita*)
- (17) Space (*ākāsa*) as the limit of physical bodies.
- (18-20) Three physical properties: lightness (*lahutā*), softness (*mudutā*) and workableness (*kammaññatā*).
- (21-23) The three characteristics of the *dhmma saṅkhata*: development (*upacaya*), continuity (*santati*) and old-age-and-impermanence (*jarā-aniccattā*), mentioned in the old Suttas (AN I, 152) by the names of arising (*uppāda*), disappearing (*vaya*) and stability-change (*ṭhitassa aññathattaṃ*).
- (24) Material nutriment (*āhāra*).

(2) Cetasika

The 52 *cetasika*, psychical, mental factors derived from the thought (*citta* or *viññāna*) to which they are concomitant. They are classed in 3 categories:

- 25 morally good (*kusala*) *cetasika*: faith (*saddhā*), etc.
- 14 morally bad (*akusala*) *cetasika*: mental delusion (*moha*), etc.
- 13 morally indeterminate (*avyākata*) *cetasika*, the quality of which depends on the nature of the thought with which they are associated. The first 7, contact (*phassa*), etc., are common to all conscious action; the last 6, reflection (*vitakka*), etc., are peculiar (*pakiṇṇaka*) to special states of consciousness.

(3) Citta

Citta is pure thought, consciousness or the state of consciousness; it is synonymous with *manas*, mind, and *viññāna*, consciousness.

- In normal life, thought never appears alone, but in conjunction with other *dharmā*: material *dharmā* which serve it as organs and objects, mental *dharmā* or states of consciousness which immediately precede it.
- It is comparable to a river which flows continuously and the waters of which are ceaselessly renewed.
- For Buddhists, the material *dharmā* and mental factors which collaborate with thought constitute so many autonomous and separate elements.
- The 3 characteristics of the conditioned *dharmā* accompany thought and determine its arising, duration and disappearance, but without becoming merged with it: these are external elements and not mere properties. The mental factors have this superiority over material *dharmā* in that they determine the karmic value of thought and mark its progress on the path of deliverance.
- The Theravādins differentiate 89 states in all in which consciousness can be found because of its association with mental and psychic factors. These states of consciousness, called *cittāni*, appear sometimes as good (*kusala*), sometimes as bad (*akusala*) through association with one of the 3 unwholesome roots, greed (*lobha*), hatred (*dosa*) or delusion (*moha*), finally, sometimes as morally indeterminate (*avyākata*) as mere results of action (*vipāka*) or as independent functions (*kiriya*). They embrace all levels of life from the World of Desire (*kāmadhātu*) and its five destinies

to the 4 stages of the Buddhist path, passing through the World of Subtle Matter (*rūpadhātu*) and the World of Formlessness (*arūpadhātu*).

In this system, important though the action of physical *dharmā* and mental factors is, it is thought that is central and determines the process of re-becoming. Hence, the Theravādins endeavored to specify its functions. They distinguished in consciousness 14 activities called *viññānakicca*:

14 Viññānakicca

1. **Paṭisandhi**, consciousness at the moment of returning to existence. This does not pass from the previous to the present one, but comes into existence by virtue of conditions incurred in the past existence: actions, volitions, propensities, objects, etc. An echo reverberated by a mountain is not the cry made by the passerby, yet it would not occur if no cry had been made. In this process, there is neither identity nor difference: thought at the time of rebirth is not the same as thought at the time of death, but is derived from it. Similarly, butter is not milk, but without milk there would be no butter.

2. **Bhavaṅga**, the subliminal consciousness which immediately succeeds the *paṭisandhi* and reproduces its object as a result of voluntary action, performed in the preceding existence and memorized immediately before death.

3. **Āvajjana**, advertence. When a material object reaches the field of the senses, it acts upon the organs and provokes a reaction from the subconscious. Immediately the "mind" element (*manodhātu*) or "mental consciousness" element (*manoviññānadhātu*) emerges from the subconscious and notes the presence of an object.

4-8. **Dassana**, vision, etc. A visual, auditive, gustatory, olfactory or tactile sensation, resulting from a good or bad action, is experienced by the corresponding sense. Nonetheless, if there is seeing and hearing, there is still no consciousness of what is seen or heard.

9. **Sampaṭicchana**, reception. The object perceived by the senses is "received" by the "mind" element (*manodhātu*).

10. **Santīraṇa**, investigation. The object received by the mind is "investigated" by the "mental consciousness" element (*manoviññānadhātu*).

11. **Votthapana**, determination. The object investigated is mechanically "determined" by the "mental consciousness" element.

12. **Javana**, swift perception. The object thus determined is correctly grasped or known by one or other state of consciousness.

13. **Tad-ārammaṇa**, identification. The known object is identified and registered. Once the operation is complete, consciousness is lost in the *bhavaṅga* or subconscious.

14. **Cuti**, the thought at the moment of death. It interrupts the stream of the subliminal (*bhavaṅgasota*), but conditions the appearance of consciousness of the return to existence (*paṭisandhi*).